

Council on Educational Services for Exceptional Children
Meeting Minutes
December 12, 2007

Members Present

Bob	Atwater
Sonja	Brown
Odell	Clanton
Jana	Griggs
Sally	Hunter
Sheila	Knapp
Shary	Maskel
Doris	McCain
Teresa	Mebane
Linda	Nelson
Dwight	Pearson
Jill	Scercy
Andy	Thacker
Gloria	Upperman
Laura	Wiley
Mark	Yost
Jane	Young

Members Absent

Marcy	Cooper
Esther	High
Linda	Jones
Cathy	Kea (excused)
Debra	McHenry (excused)

DPI Staff / Presenters

John	Brim
Tish	Bynum
Bobbie	Grammer
Kate	Neale
David	Test
Mary	Watson
Ira	Wolfe

Visitors Present

Kathy	Blakenship
Cynthia	Daniels-Hall
Eric	Hall
Lynn	Nietfeld
Lisa	Townsend
Lee	Williamson

Welcome, Review of Agenda, Approval of Minutes

Chairperson Jane Young opened the meeting by welcoming members and guests. Members and guests were introduced. New Council members Representative Laura Wiley, Sally Hunter, Gloria Upperman, Cathy Kea and Senator Bob Atwater were recognized. Mary Watson expressed a special appreciation to Representative Laura Wiley for her diligent work on revising Article 9.

After noting a minor change in the June meeting minutes, a motion was made to approve the minutes. Motion was seconded and the meeting minutes were approved.

NC Virtual Public Schools

John Brim, Chief Operating Officer of NC Virtual Public Schools (NCVPS), was introduced to the Council. Mr. Brim's presentation provided general information on NCVPS and a new program, Learn and Earn.

The NCVPS is a supplementary online program for high schools and provides an opportunity for students to take courses that they may not otherwise be able to take. Student participation is voluntary. Schools do not have to provide time during the school day. Therefore, the student can dedicate as much or as little time as needed in taking an online course. There is a course instructor in charge of instruction, assessments, graduation, etc. There is interaction with the online course instructor.

The summer courses can offer high school credit recovery. The courses are accelerated, generally five weeks, and a student can earn up to 11 credits.

Examples of courses offered include accelerated courses, second languages and courses that LEAs would not otherwise be able to offer because of financial reasons, i.e. the number of students and/or money for qualified teachers.

DPI has offered online courses since 2003. It was found that there was a need for advanced courses but students' schedules did not always coincide with classroom course offerings. Only courses evaluated through a rigorous approval system are provided. Courses are currently on a three-year review cycle. NCVPS is working toward modeling Florida's program to review courses every year and use a checklist.

Currently, there are 1,539 students in accelerated courses and 5,451 students in credit recovery. Of the credit recovery students, there is approximately a 40% passing rate. There will be a revised approach to increase the passing rate for credit recovery students next year.

In fall 2007, 102 LEAs and 18 Charter Schools participated in NCVPS. There are textbooks online for 49 courses. NCVPS is working toward adding 72 courses in the spring. Some of these are from external vendors. The external vendors will be eliminated as soon as NCVPS hires teachers for the courses.

NCVPS is looking into Section 504/IEP compliance issues and Section 508 requiring web pages be accessible to the disabled. NCVPS requests LEAs to indicate if the student has an IEP. LEAs do not always accurately report IEP status. NCVPS will work with LEAs to meet IEP and Section 504 accommodations; however, NCVPS is in the beginning stages of learning how to make accommodations.

Rep. Laura Wiley asked how do we know the *student* is actually doing the work? NCVPS has developed a plan with the LEA distant learning advisor to oversee telephone conversations between student and teacher. Tests must be taken in front of school personnel. There could be a possibility of using webcams. This would involve ensuring appropriate internet connections in all LEAs.

Jill **Scery** asked how students know this option is available to them and is there a list of schools using NCVPS. NCVPS uses a "marketing" strategic awareness plan in every school system, letting them know what has worked best for other LEAs. Information has been sent to all guidance counselors, principals, superintendents and appointed school contacts via listserves. Does most of the work happen outside the school day on the child's time? It depends on the student. Some students take full course loads; others just take extra courses not otherwise offered by the school.

Teresa Mebane asked for an explanation of accommodations that NCVPS can and can not do. One example of an accommodation is online course text book can be provided in paper form.

Linda Nelson advised this could be great for hearing impaired students to obtain mainstream courses. There could be a webcam for live signing and/or videotaped interpreter for online courses.

Mary Watson asked if a student starting in a regular classroom setting can merge into online courses if long-term suspended or illness occurs. Mr. Brim stated that the student must be passing existing core courses.

Jana Griggs wanted to know how NCVPS handles outcomes of EOG and test results. NCVPS is working with DPI's Accountability Division on data to compare virtual classes to traditional classes.

Rep. Wiley asked about youth correctional facilities' enrollment. Currently, there is not a high enrollment from these facilities probably due to internet connection issues. Jane Young noted that AP courses are not generally appropriate for the students. If the teacher must be present and administer tests, the teacher might as well teach the course. This is not time effective for Department of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention.

Jill Scercy asked how does NCVPS obtain teachers. Mr. Brim advised there were over 800 applicants. NCVPS looks for previous online experience along with State teacher requirements. There is also a training process to complete. Currently, there are no certified EC teachers for NCVPS, but they will be forthcoming.

Learn and Earn is an opportunity for high school students to earn an associate's degree online while still in high school. Students can take certain courses and receive credit for high school and community college. This requires an LEA onsite facility and must be monitored by the LEA.

UNC-G iSchool has been offering online college courses for ten years. There are 44 community colleges offering 243 online courses. There are 277 high schools in 70 LEAs offering Learn and Earn. The school has to meet minimum technical requirements. The schedule to look at course modifications with Learn and Earn is the same as for NCVPS.

SPP – Indicator 14, Post-Secondary Outcomes

Bobbie Grammer gave a background summary of the State Performance Plan (SPP) for the Council. There are 20 Indicators with specific data required for each Indicator. Indicator 14 - post-secondary outcomes – is now a federal mandate and DPI is required to collect these data.

UNC-Charlotte is assisting the Exceptional Children Division with data collection on Indicator 14. It is very laborious. It is difficult to collect post school data relative to graduation, drop out and transition. UNC-Charlotte is a national transition center and is helping the entire county with Indicator 14. NC is very fortunate to have them in this state.

The SPP and APR are posted on the EC Division website. February 1, 2008 is the reporting date to the federal government. Ms. Grammer introduced Dr. David Test, a professor at UNC-Charlotte and is the lead in Indicator 14 data collection.

Dr. Test advised that for 2005-06 exiting students, LEAs should collect demographic data and collect contact info. It is important to get good exit data. This is used for NC baseline data. This target is set until 2010.

Every school system is on a five-year evaluation cycle. Mainly, the data are collected through live calls, but there are also written surveys. Calls are made via a call center, Potsdam Institute for Applied Research. Potsdam is a national call center and is conducting a followup survey. It was suggested that the survey be a random sampling or an every-student survey. The every-student survey is acceptable for small states, but NC currently conducts random sampling (60%). NC would like to work toward reducing the 60% rate.

The response rate is currently 52% (1,070 respondents out of 2,071); 38% are unreachable. Dr. Test advised that 52% is good for the first year. It is expected the response rate will increase every year. Drop outs are the hardest to find for all states. NC has good rate of students going to community colleges. The “engaged at any time within one year” threshold is a former student employed and/or not employed or continuing/not continuing their education or a combination thereof. This includes military. Ms. Grammer advised that NC is obligated to stay with the data and cannot go below the baseline. However, NC must be able to explain progress or slippage. LEAs know when they will be surveyed. Andy Thacker relayed the concern that there is little control over who the caller will talk to. The respondents are sometimes very suspicious of the callers.

The EC Division and the National Secondary Transition Technical Assistance Center request recommendation(s) from the Council to set the targets for the Indicator, identify evidence-based secondary transition practices and provide “intensive” statewide training to address the identified areas of primary concern. Ira Wolfe wants the first recommendations to come from the Council.

Ms. Wolfe will email Council the Indicators once they are written up.

SPP and LEA Reporting

The EC Division website has an annual report posted for each LEA for Indicators 1, 2, 3, 4a, 5, 6 and 12. All compliance Indicators’ targets are set at 100% by the federal government. The 2006-07 data will be reported in the February 1 State APR which is about 81% on Indicator 12 (transition from Part C to Part B). Charter Schools are removed from Indicator 12 and 6 because they do not have preschools. The updated LEA reports will be on the website by the end of May. Mr. Pearson requested a copy of the state APR report.

Senator Atwater asked if there is a direct correlation in schools with high performing regular education students with high performing exceptional children education. Ms. Watson advised that there is not necessarily a direct correlation.

Agency Update

Ms. Watson thanked members for the time and service put into the Council.

The congressional budget is currently in a **grid lock** ~~gridlock~~ **(one word)** for education funding. It does not look promising, **(add comma)** especially for State Improvement Project funding, which is used for capacity building, literacy, PBS and staff development. Reading First may also be ~~effected~~ **affected**.

Ms. Watson attended the Responsiveness to Instruction (RtI) Summit in Washington, DC. The EC Division has been training LEAs on RtI for the past three years. The results decreased the students referred to special education and increased performance in existing EC students. DPI's Associate Superintendent, Robert Logan, favorably received the information and sees that this initiative involves an all-school transformation.

Ms. Watson recognized the work of the Rep. Wiley, EC Division staff and others in the ~~re-write revision~~ of Article 9. It was the most comprehensive ~~re-write revision~~ of NC special education law within the past 30 years. This ~~subsequently~~ **subsequently** led to the ~~re-write revisions~~ of the *Policies*. The Policies Governing Services for Children with Disabilities were approved by the SBE at the November meeting. IDEA, Article 9 and *Policies* are NC's tools for administering special education. *Policies* is posted on the EC Division website. NC's class size regulation exceeds federal law. The *Guiding Practices* document is under development and should be ready by spring. IEP and forms training is also under development. The *Guiding Practices* document contains known best practices, and the *Policies* are the law.

Ms. Watson wished everyone a safe and Merry Christmas.

A motion was made to adjourn the meeting. The motion was seconded and the meeting was adjourned.